



**University of  
Zurich**<sup>UZH</sup>

**Zurich Open Repository and  
Archive**

University of Zurich  
University Library  
Strickhofstrasse 39  
CH-8057 Zurich  
[www.zora.uzh.ch](http://www.zora.uzh.ch)

---

Year: 2011

---

## **From ‘patriotism’ to mass murder: Dr. Mehmed Reşid (1873–1919)**

Kieser, H L

Posted at the Zurich Open Repository and Archive, University of Zurich

ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-61403>

Book Section

Accepted Version

Originally published at:

Kieser, H L (2011). From ‘patriotism’ to mass murder: Dr. Mehmed Reşid (1873–1919). In: Suny, R. A question of genocide: Armenians and Turks at the end of the Ottoman Empire,. New York: Oxford University Press, 126-149.

## Chapter 6

### From “Patriotism” to Mass Murder: Dr Mehmed Reşid (1873-1919)

Hans-Lukas Kieser

Dr Mehmed Reşid had been among the founders of the *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (Committee Union and Progress, CUP).<sup>1</sup> But unlike co-founder Dr Abdullah Cevdet, or other émigrés from Russia, Dr Ali Hüseyinzade and Yusuf Akçura, he did not excel intellectually. Neither was he a member of the hard core of the CUP that had been forming since 1906. Rather idealistic, and fancying himself to be incorruptible, he lacked the pragmatic sense of power of colleagues such as Dr. Nâzım and Bahaeddin Şakir, or of his future boss, Minister of the Interior Tâlât Bey. All the more, he can be seen as a typical representative of the İttihadist generation with a middle-class background and Western style education, while at the same time, a distrustful, proud and radical nationalist. How could a well educated, upright patriot become then a mass murderer?

Born in the Russian-administered Caucasus in 1873, Mehmed Reşid Shahingiray moved with his family to Istanbul in 1874. He became an Ottoman subject, grew up in the Ottoman capital and studied at the Military Medical School. After the Young Turkish Revolution of 1908, he decided to change over from medicine to the civil administration and became a governor of the district and finally, in 1915, governor (*vali*) of the province of Diyarbakır. It was a small elite, made up of a few dozen people, which, led by a handful of figureheads, profoundly affected the fate of Turkey between 1908 and 1938. Dr Reşid was particularly implicated in the expulsion of

---

<sup>1</sup> A much earlier and longer version of this chapter had been published under the title “Dr. Mehmed Reşid (1873–1919: A political doctor” in Hans L. Kieser and Dominik J. Schaller (eds.), *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah/ The Armenian Genocide and the Shoah* (Zürich: Chronos, 2002), pp. 245–280. For more on Reşid's governorship, see Üngör, Ü. Uğur, “Center and Periphery in the Armenian Genocide: The Case of Diyarbekir Province,” in Kieser, Hans-Lukas, and Plozza, Elmar (eds.), *Der Genozid an den Armeniern, die Türkei und Europa/ The Armenian Genocide, Turkey and Europa* (Zürich: Chronos, 2006), pp. 71-88; and David Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia during World War I* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006).

Greek Christians and the extermination of Armenians and Assyrians (Syriac Christians) in 1914–1916. The officious *Türk Ansiklopedisi* (Turkish Encyclopaedia) in its volume 32, published in 1978, presents him as a perfect patriot. Mithat Shükrü, CUP Secretary General during World War I, says that many members of the party thoroughly shared the opinions of the *vali* of Diyarbakır, but that after the cease-fire of 1918 they changed their language.<sup>2</sup>

Dr Reşid is a terrifying figure, but there is also something tragic about him. A victim of the dynamics, fears and ideals that he shared with the members of his party, he, unlike many others, did not have the time to rewrite his past. The writings he left behind therefore retain, in all their subjectivity, a rare authenticity.<sup>3</sup> Indeed he met an untypical end. Unlike the vast majority of İttihadists (CUP members), he was unable to manage his personal transition from the war regime under Tâlât and Enver to the national movement under Mustafa Kemal. Neither did he manage to

---

<sup>2</sup> Güngör, Salâhattin, “Bir Canlı Tarih Konuşuyor”, *Resimli Tarih*, 5 July 1953, 2445.

<sup>3</sup> I am using the edition by Nejdet Bilgi: Mehmed Reşid [Şahingiray], *Hayatı ve Hâtıraları*, ed. by N. Bilgi (Izmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1997). I will refer to it as “Bilgi 1997”, but will cite the texts of Mehmed Reşid by their titles, e.g. “Reşid, *Balıkesir Notları*,” giving the page numbers according to Bilgi’s edition, which comprises the following texts of Reşid: 1) *Taşkışla Hatıraları*, 57–64; 2) *Balıkesir Notları*, 65–76; 3) *Mülâhazât: Ermeni Meselesi ve Diyarbekir Hatıraları*, 77–114; 4) *Günlük: Tevkiften İntihara kadar*, 115–154; 5) *Vasiyetnâme*, 157–58; 6) *Hal Tercümesi: Kendi El Yazısı İle Biyografisi*, 163–65; 7) *Arzı: 1911 Yılına Ait Bir Arzı*, pp. 173–177.

The edition *Dr. Reşid Bey’in Hatıraları: ‘Sürgünden İntihara’*, by A. Mehmetefendioğlu (Istanbul: Arba, 1993), contrary to Bilgi’s edition, only gives the censored version of *Mülâhazât* and *Günlük* as they were published in 1919 in the newspapers *Alemdar* and *Memleket*.

In addition, I will use the following text: Cevrî (Mehmed Reşid Bey), *İnkılâb Niçin ve Nasıl Oldu* (Mısır: Matbaa-i İctihad, 1909). There is a new edition also by Bilgi (Izmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1994). I will cite it as Cevrî, *İnkılâb*. Most probably Cevrî is a pseudonym for Mehmed Reşid [see N. Bilgi’s arguments in the introduction: Cevrî, *İnkılâb*, 11–23], even if before 1908 Mehmed Reşid had used the CUP nickname “Çerkes Lâmi” od “Lâli” [see Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 286–289, n. 410, n. 478, n. 487, and p. 356, n. 86]

flee abroad, as did the great party leaders. A few days after the armistice he was arrested by the Ottoman authorities, who accused him of being responsible for the massacre of the Armenians and the murder of two *kaymakams* who, in 1915, had opposed his anti-Christian policies in the province of Diyarbakır. He realized that he would be executed and therefore took his own life in February 1919, after having previously made an attempt to escape.

Mehmed Reşid Shahingiray is part of what can be called the first Young Turkish cohort. Like the second Young Turkish cohort, it came primarily from the middle class and from outside the capital where it generally studied at the state élite schools. Contrary to the second cohort, its seminal intellectual experience was not the Turkist awakening – the ethno-nationalist self-articulation as members of a “Turkish nation” in the 1910s. Its first concern was how to save the Ottoman Empire, considered as the last defense of the Islamic world, against imperialist European powers. This was particularly true for the “Turks” (term used as synonym for the Muslims) from Russia who lived as émigrés in Istanbul, the seat of the Sultanate and Caliphate. Mehmed Reşid was part of a social stratum of often bourgeois Russian Muslim immigrants who decisively influenced the Turkish national movement from the end of the nineteenth century. It is within the circles of Turkish speaking Muslims from Russia that from the outset Islam was integrated into Turkish nationalism, and Turkism was born. This prepared the move to the general ethno-national “awakening” among educated Turks in the 1910s within the broad movement of the *Foyers turcs* (*Türk yurdu* and *Türk ocağı*).<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that the atmosphere in late tsarist Russia's urban centers and particularly among its diasporas in Western Europe and Istanbul led to the creation of movements that decisively shaped the Eastern European and Middle Eastern world in the twentieth century: revolutionary socialism as well as revolutionary ethnic nationalism among Poles, Armenians, Muslims, Jews, and others. These diasporas were hotbeds of Turkism, Zionism, Armenian and other nationalisms.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. François Georgeon, *Aux origines du nationalisme turc: Yusuf Akçura (1876–1935)* (Paris: Ed. ADPF, 1980). For a study of the Russian Turks in late Ottoman Istanbul see Volker Adam, *Russlandmuslime in Istanbul am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. my book *Vorkämpfer der «neuen Türkei». Revolutionäre Bildungseliten am Genfersee (1870–1939)* (Zürich: Chronos, 2005); in Turkish: *Türklüğe İhtida. 1870-1939 İsviçre'sinde yeni Türkiye'nin öncüleri* (Istanbul: İletisim, 2008).

“Revolution” in the political history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries means legitimizing violence against those considered enemies of the project to be realized. The revolutionary project to be realized in the *fin de siècle* was the abolition of Abdül Hamid 's “despotism” in order to make progress and strengthen the empire. The Turkist project to be implemented in the 1910s was different: it was to “inject,” as the founders of the *Foyers* put it, into a whole academic generation “the great national goal,” i.e., awakening, educating and building up a modern ethno-nation from the Turkish speaking Muslims in Anatolia.<sup>6</sup> In 1897, Mehmed Reşid, pointing to the Hamidian system, had declared “war on those who harass the fatherland from within.”<sup>7</sup> As sincere as the patriotic commitment of the young doctor may have been, it carried in itself a powerful categorical vision of evil. Probably at the end of 1896, he asked to hire some “bloodthirsty anarchists” and send them to assassinate the sultan, known as the “great despotic satan.”<sup>8</sup> The revolutionary hatred was openly expressed in the Young Turks’ early imaginations against Abdül Hamid. They frequently used medical and biological metaphors to argue “scientifically” what they consider wrong with their enemy.<sup>9</sup>

Whereas the broad and influential movement of the *Foyers turcs*, founded in 1911, had a strong Turkist molding, the Committee of Union and Progress, founded twenty-two years earlier, was nationalist in a Ottoman Muslim sense. Significantly, both movements originated at the Military Medical School, *Mekteb-i Tıbbiye-i Askeriye*, in Constantinople.<sup>10</sup> At the end of the century, the Military Medical School was the meeting point of three elements fundamental to the Turkish national movement of the following decades: Western science, elitist political conspiracy

---

<sup>6</sup> *Yurddcular Yasası, İsviçre’de Cenevre şehrine yakın Petit-Lancy Köyünde Pension Racine’de kurulan İkinci Yurddcular Derneği’nin muzakerat ve mukerreratı* (Istanbul: Yeni Turan Matbaası, 1914), p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Reşid, *Taşkıyla Hatıraları*, pp. 60–61.

<sup>8</sup> As he wrote to İshak Sükûti of the CUP-center in Geneva (Hanioğlu 1995, 105); İbrahim Temo, *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti’nin kurucusu ve 1/1 no’lu İbrahim Temo’nun İttihad ve Terakki Anıları* (Istanbul: Arba yay., 1987) (originally published, 1939), p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> For a poignant example see *Osmanlı* No. 7, French edition, Geneva, 5 June 1898, 1-2, quoted in Kieser, *Vorkämpfer*, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Sarıay, Yusuf, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Tarihî Gelişimi ve Türk Ocakları 1912–1931* (Istanbul: Ötüken, 1994), pp. 121–127.

and military institution. A former *Tıbbiyeli* (student of this school) from the end of the century, conveyed the atmosphere and attitude among the students:

The teachers and students were dominated by a deeply rooted '*Tıbbiyeli* spirit'.  
[...] This school was the first window of the Ottoman Empire open to the Western world. Those who studied there turned towards the West. The *Tıbbiyeli* knew the difference between the East and the West, and bitterly resented the pain of being backward. For this reason, it was a hotbed of patriotism, of love of freedom, and of efforts to deliver us from oriental sloth and to raise us as quickly as possible to the high level of civilization peculiar to other countries. The *Tıbbiyeli* always assumed a rebellious attitude toward the despotic and reactionary administration of the last Sultans of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>11</sup>

"The classrooms and the rooms of the final-year students were all centers of learning. There, one read, wrote, treated and discussed everything," writes Cevrî (probably a pseudonym for Dr Reşid).<sup>12</sup> On 21 May 1889, according to Cevrî, five students from the Military Medical School – *Arabkirli* Abdullah Cevdet, *Kafkasyalı* Mehmed Reşid, *Ohrili* İbrahim Edhem (Temo), *Diyarbakırlı* İshak Sükûti and *Konyalı* Hikmet Emin – formed the conspiratorial core that would soon assume the name of *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, Committee for Union and Progress (CUP).<sup>13</sup> They were all convinced that "the dear fatherland was heading for disaster." Mehmed Reşid wondered how a large secret society could be erected that might win the battle "against the great despotic Satan," Abdül Hamid. İbrahim Temo reassured him by pointing to the example of the Greek committee *Etniki Heteria*.<sup>14</sup> The conspiracy was sealed by handshake. In 1893, a large majority of the *Askeri Tıbbiyeli* were to be members of the CUP, each with numbers and codenames to ensure secrecy.

"It was a student's pleasure which delighted me no end, that we would mock the administration, the sultan, people in high positions and other grave matters, and that we would make fun of religion," wrote one *Tıbbiyeli*. The *Tıbbiyeli* called the school laboratory "the

---

<sup>11</sup> Sağlam, Tevfik, *Nasıl Okudum*, Istanbul: Atlas & Nehir İletişim, 1991 (1959), 74–75.

<sup>12</sup> Cevrî, *İnkılâb*, 50.

<sup>13</sup> Cevrî, *İnkılâb*, 48–51. Cf. Tunaya, Tarık Zafer, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, vol. 3: İttihat ve Terakki, bir Çağın, bir Kuşağın, bir Partinin Tarihi, Istanbul: İletişim, 1998 (1989), 27.

<sup>14</sup> Temo 1987, 13–15.

edifice of wisdom.”<sup>15</sup> Man was nature’s product, determined by the laws of nature, by race, and by the law of “survival of the fittest.” In place of God was impersonal nature as conceived by the leading sciences of the end of the century (biology, chemistry, physics). Religion and devotion to the Hamidian system went hand-in-hand. Religious education, which was mandatory in school, culminated in the phrase: “Be a soldier under Abdül Hamid Han / He must be obeyed by order of the Koran.” Every evening, in accordance with military discipline, the *Tıbbiyeli* fell into rank to shout “Long live the sultan.” But they preferred to remain silent or to transform the phrase into a curse, and so by contrast devised slogans exalting the fatherland, the nation, freedom and science.<sup>16</sup>

In a booklet written in 1909, Cevrî informs us of open student propaganda activities in response to the great anti-Armenian pogroms of 1894–1896: “After the painful event which the massacre of the Armenians (1310–1312) was, we decided on a new strategy, which on the one hand consisted of attracting the attention of Europe, and on the other, of informing the people of the crimes committed by the despotic government.”<sup>17</sup> This greatly frightened the government, for in spite of strict police surveillance, we distributed pamphlets in public places and put up many declarations for example on the walls of police stations and the palace, or in mosques, schools, boats and trams.” What was the content of these leaflets? Cevrî sums it up:

All peoples bearing the title of ‘Ottoman’ are brothers. The massacre of the Armenians in Istanbul [August 1896] is a shame to Ottomans, but without a doubt, it is not the Turks, but the Hamidian government and its executioners who are to blame. Europe, demanding reforms in Turkey, is making use of this motif and wants to declare Turks barbarians and incapable of reforms. In order for the *Yıldız* [the sultan’s palace] not to fall into this trap, one must strive to unite the different Ottoman peoples, and to topple the despotic government. In short, if we do not wish our destruction, let us unite all Ottoman peoples, and let us strive for freedom and to reinstate the law.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Sağlam 1991, 85.

<sup>16</sup> Nur 1967, vol. 1, 123–134 and 252, citation 127, distich cited in Georgeon 1980, 14. Cf. Sağlam 1991, 77–79.

<sup>17</sup> According to the *Malî* calendar (massacre in Sassun, 1894 - pogrom in Istanbul, 1896).

<sup>18</sup> Cevrî, *İnkılâb*, 52–53.

Another CUP leaflet of 1896 used a language less favorable to the Armenians, reproaching their defiance of “our state” through “insolent activities.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the persecution by the Hamidian government and anti-Christian clichés, reinforced by the Russian Muslim émigrés, wiped out the major crime of the massacres of 1894–96 in the memory of the İttihadists; nonetheless, this crime was still prominent in the booklet published in 1909 (probably) by the CUP’s co-founder.<sup>20</sup>

In 1894, Dr Reşid became assistant to the German professor, Düring Pasha, at the hospital of Haydarpasha. When the Hamidian police learned of his membership of the secret organisation, he was arrested and exiled to Libya in 1897. Soon after his arrest he explained himself to soldiers returning from the Greco-Turkish War of the same year, for whom he uses the honorific term *gazi*:

“Like you, we have waged war for the fatherland. You have waged war against those who have attacked our fatherland from outside, and you have won. We have declared war on those who harass the fatherland from within, and we are sure that we will win. We call to call to account those who ruin our country, exploit our villages, and cause our enemies to insult our religion and our nation. [...] The Ottoman element is shrinking. Ottoman land is disappearing piece by piece. Of this, we are witnesses, and we know who the culprits are. In order to make all this evil disappear, in order to rescue our working village dwellers and feed them well, we have declared war on these libertines, these tyrants, these enemies of the fatherland [...]” Speaking these words, I experienced a nervous shudder. I understood that these words that sprang from my mouth mixed with tears were making a strong impression on our guardians.<sup>21</sup>

This strong feeling of evil, fear of loss and deadly hate of those, considered culprits, make up the “nerve” of Reşid’s “radical personality.”

---

<sup>19</sup> Temo 1987, 42. See also points 1 and 2 of the regulations of the CUP in its first years: Tunaya, Tarık Zafer, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler*, vol. 1: İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi, 1908–18, İstanbul: İletişim, 1998–99, 70.

<sup>20</sup> Cevrî, *İnkilâb*, 37, 42–43 and 52.

<sup>21</sup> Reşid, *Taşkışla Hatıraları*, 57–63, quotation 60–61.



For ten years, Reşid stayed in Tripoli as a doctor in state service. There, sometime in 1901-1902, he married Mazlûme Hanım, daughter of adjutant major Ziya Bey, who was also living in exile. He seems to have had a happy time there, devoted to his family, to his job at the hospital, to discussions with his friends and to some endeavors in education. In 1900 he prompted the exiles to open a library in which lectures were given to the inhabitants on basic subjects.<sup>22</sup> After the Young Turk revolution, in August 1908, Mehmed Reşid returned from Tripoli to Constantinople with his other exiled friends. In December, he was promoted to adjutant major, and worked as a military doctor for a couple of months. At the end of 1908, he tried to establish himself politically in the capital. It is during this time that he very probably wrote a booklet on the genesis of the Young Turk revolution.<sup>23</sup> “In order better to serve my country, I found it necessary to change my profession.” On 20 August 1909, he resigned from military service.<sup>24</sup>

In the capital, the old exile became involved in politics. It seems surprising to see him temporarily associate himself with the movement of Prince Sabahaddin, which was constituted as a liberal party, *Fırka-i Ahrar*, in September 1908.<sup>25</sup> Why did Reşid Bey want to join them? We lack sufficient information to provide a clear and straightforward answer. Like the other surviving founders of the CUP, he was no longer at the center of the party he had founded. What appealed to him in Sabahaddin’s group was no doubt the emphasis laid on private initiative, for he was skeptical of the state as it presented itself at the time, with Hamidian functionaries still in place.<sup>26</sup> Besides, he was not against decentralization on condition that it would take place under the roof of Muslim unity.<sup>27</sup> But the prince’s consideration for minorities could hardly have pleased him. In the tense atmosphere prevailing in the capital after the attempted coup of April 1909 (*31 Mart Vakası*), those with political ambitions had to tread carefully. As a matter of fact,

---

<sup>22</sup> Hanioglu 1995, 207.

<sup>23</sup> Cevrî 1909.

<sup>24</sup> Reşid, *Hal Tercümesi*, 164.

<sup>25</sup> Tunaya 1998, vol. 1, 175.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Reşid’s memorandum of 14 October 1904 to the Hamidian authorities, in which he criticizes the insufficiency and irresponsibility of the Ottoman administration at Tripolis. Bilgi 1997, 17.

<sup>27</sup> Reşid, *Hatıraları*, 79–80.

in the same year, Dr Reşid found himself no longer associated with Sabahaddin. Looking back, Ahmet Bedevi Kuran, a friend and disciple of the prince, wrote: “Recognizing that the Committee for Union and Progress was unwilling to compromise, a few figures from *Teşebbüs-i Şahsi* [Sabahaddin’s Party of Private Initiative]...came to terms with Union and Progress by accepting the positions offered to them.... Dr Reşid was among those who changed sides.”<sup>28</sup>

On October 9, 1909, Mehmed Reşid was installed as *kaymakam* of İstanköy in the Archipelago. In February 1910 he was promoted to *mutasarrıf* of Hums in the province of Tripoli (Lebanon), only to be removed in June 1911, accused by the provincial authorities of having failed to remain impartial in the administrative affairs of the *sancak*.<sup>29</sup> A memorandum on the state of Tripoli in Libya, probably addressed to the vali there, sheds light on possible further reasons behind his frequent transfers. Dr Reşid complains of the grave insufficiency of medical care and preventative measures for civilian travelers in the *kaza* of Mısrat. He gives advice, and warns of the possibility of dire consequences for the entire province. This conduct, as justified as it might have been, was rather audacious for a *kaymakam* but was framed by a militant patriotic discourse: “My life bears witness to the fact that your servant does not waste his time on speeches, but instead devotes himself to action and to effort. I am proud of having been, at the age of seventeen, among the founders of Union and Progress.... Since that time, my life has served to bewail the misfortune of my nation and my country and to exact revenge on those responsible for this misfortune.”<sup>30</sup> He gave an example of his zeal “for the defense of the rights of his country” by retelling an event that had occurred during the month preceding the revolution of 1908, when the parliament of the city of Tripoli (Libya) presided by Hasan Pasha wished to “give one of the most respectable landed properties to the Italians out of friendship for Nejad Bey, son of the *vali*. Mehmed Reşid regarded this action as a crime against the fatherland: “In order to excite religious fervor [*gayret-i diniye*] and national zeal [*hamiyet-i milliye*], I was not ashamed to execrate the entire despotic government, including Abdül Hamid.” In a note above

---

<sup>28</sup> Kuran, Ahmed Bedevi, *İnkılap Tarihimiz ve Jön Türkler*, Istanbul: Kaynak, 2000 (1945), 328. Cf. Bilgi 1997, 18–19.

<sup>29</sup> With the İttihadists in place, however, the *Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti Hums Livâ Heyet-i Merkeziyesi* thanked him in a letter of 19/20 June for his valuable services to the nation, the fatherland and the party; Bilgi 1997, 20–21.

<sup>30</sup> Reşid, *Arzi*, 175–176

the line, he explains: “In crying out publicly that all those who perpetrated such a crime – Abdül Hamid, the *vali*, the city council – were traitors, I took neither my situation nor my future into account, nor even my own life, and proved that life would be without value to me if the fatherland were lost.”<sup>31</sup> Here again is a demonstration of Reşid's radical personality as a committed patriot.

His patriotic confession was coupled with the conviction of having rendered excellent services as governor of Hums. He emphasizes the order and discipline acquired thanks to his *kaymakamlık*. Toward the end of the text, he declares, “Consequently, it is clear that I shall continue, as I have always done, to pursue with all my strength the duty which I consider as sacred as my honor.”<sup>32</sup> One hardly doubts the good faith of the author of this memorandum, who proudly presents himself as founder of the CUP, fervent patriot and man of action. Even so, his intransigence is disconcerting. With the fervor of a Jacobean, he declares himself prepared to sacrifice everything for the highest patriotic value. Reserving no special treatment for either local notables or higher authorities, he wants to vent his anger on all those responsible in his eyes for the sufferings of “my nation.” By the outbreak of the War of Tripoli (September 1911– October 1912), we are dealing with a functionary Reşid prepared to go very far for his ideals.

After a brief intermezzo as *mutasarrıf* of Kozan, on July 25, 1911, Reşid Bey was appointed *mutasarrıf* of Lazistan (Rize), a post from which he was removed on September 10, 1912 for his belligerent behavior. Administrative inquiries followed that would, on November 7, 1912, return to Mehmed Reşid the right to continue in his office. Süleyman Nazif, at the time employed in the *vilayet* of Trebizond, in a retrospective article described the *mutasarrıf* of Lazistan as a legalist (*kanunperest*). But his incorruptible character inspired personal respect, and promoted discipline within the administration.<sup>33</sup> It is not until after the establishment of the CUP's dictatorship on January 23, 1913 that we see Mehmed Reşid once again solidly installed in a position. On June 7, 1913 he was very briefly reinstalled in Lazistan, and then, on July 8, 1913, appointed *mutasarrıf* of Karesi (province of Balıkesir), where he remained until 23 July 1914.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Reşid, *Arzi*, 176.

<sup>32</sup> “*namusum derecesinde mukaddes bildiğim vazifemi*”, Reşid, *Arzi*, 177.

<sup>33</sup> “Doktor Reşid”, *Hadisat*, 8 Şubat 1919, entirely transliterated in Bilgi 1997, 167–171, here 168–169.

<sup>34</sup> Bilgi 1997, 21.

At Karesi, for the first time, the patriotic fervor of Dr Reşid was expressed through large-scale anti-Christian actions. He was one of the protagonists of the policy of illegal expulsion of Greeks from the Aegean coast, a violent policy hardly concealed from diplomatic circles, and executed by party and government organs. The İttihadists saw it as retaliation for the evil which, according to them, the Muslims under Greek domination had been suffering since the Balkan Wars.<sup>35</sup> The person of the *mutasarrıf* of Karesi united party and government affiliation. His hasty deployment to the region seems to have served appropriate plans. Foremost, he devoted his office to the expulsion of the *Rumlar* (Greek-Orthodox Ottomans) and to the resettlement, to Bulgaristan, of the Bulgarians from the cities and villages of his government. Anti-Christian attitudes among İttihadist had come to the political surface and become radicalized during the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. A year before the entry of the Ottoman Empire into World War I, the key players in the CUP had formed a highly destructive view of the Anatolian Christians as “a mortal worry,” as a race and a privileged class to be combated; as a “tumor” requiring an operation. Celal [Bayar] Bey, head of the Smyrna cell of Union and Progress in 1914, confirms in his memoirs that the CUP and the ministry of war, run by Enver since January 3, 1914, were, parallel to the regular activities of the government, working towards the liquidation of “concentrations of non-Muslims” in the Aegean region, and he details the methods of intimidation used in order to “encourage” them to emigrate.<sup>36</sup> Especially after the international

---

<sup>35</sup> While the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria in November 1913 concluded the first intergovernmental treaty for population transfer in modern history, talks with Greece did not happen. Therefore the İttihadists implemented secret politics of expulsion by spreading panic in the *Rum* villages from the beginning of 1914. Cf. BOA DH.KMS 17/29, cited in Bilgi 1997, 22; Ladas, Stephen, *The exchange of minorities. Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey*, New York: Macmillan, 1932, 18–23; Naimark, Norman M., *Fires of hatred: ethnic cleansing in twentieth-century Europe*, Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 2001, 43. Şenşekerci, Erkan, *Türk devriminde Celal Bayar, 1918–1960*, Istanbul: Alfa, 2000, 35–41.

<sup>36</sup> Bayar, Celal, *Ben de yazdım*, vol. 5, Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1965–67, 1573. The nationalist author Nurdoğan Taçalan wrote in 1970: “Union and Progress had taken a final decision. The sources of trouble had to be eliminated, the *Rumlar* had to be eliminated by political and economic measures. At the very outset, the *Rumlar* who were economically powerful needed to be broken and destroyed” (Taçalan, Nurdoğan, *Ege'de Kurtuluş Savaşı*

reactivation of the reform issue for the Eastern Provinces in 1913, the İttihadists established negative views of the Armenians similar to those of the *Rumlar*. The reactivation of the “Armenian reforms” had to do with the fact, that the CUP had not been able to solve, as had been agreed with the Armenian *Dashnaktsutiun* (its electoral partner since 1908), the agrarian question in the Eastern provinces, which would have meant the restitution of Armenian property taken, mostly by Kurds during the great pogroms in the 1890s.

The *Balıkesir Notları* of Mehmed Reşid contain a blend of social frustration and nationalistic aversion. During an excursion between July 29 and August 7, 1913, he recorded the then current state of affairs, and projected a “better” future without *Rumlar*, writing on paper bearing the letterhead “Secretariat of the *mutasarrıflık* of Karesi”.<sup>37</sup> The dream of a modern administration and infrastructure went hand-in-hand with the establishment of unrestricted Turkish-Muslim political, economic, and demographic domination. What resulted, was a polarized image: on the one hand, the *Rumlar*, socially envied and viewed all the less favorably because they were prospering in many places; and on the other hand, the good Muslims and their (sic!) state, which must be strengthened at all cost, because they were subject to exploitation and Christian intrigues.

In summer 1913, Mehmed Reşid was thus a high İttihadist functionary who, in his private notes, no longer considered the Ottoman *Rumlar* as compatriots (*vatandaşlar*), but as “foreigners” and internal enemies against whom the severest measures needed to be taken, including expropriation and expulsion. His excursion seems to have been the preparation for this. In Karesi his rigorousness fuelled dispositions that bore the imprint of social and national hate and of social, economic, ethnic and demographic engineering. The goal was the installation of modern national structures, visible through good roads, tramways, beautiful public buildings, and the absence of multiculturalism. One had to shatter the regional reality as it then existed. The towns and villages needed to be re-planned in order to strengthen the Muslim element and concentrate economic prosperity into its hands. Functionaries were needed who were more nationalist, as well as a police force that was better equipped.

---

*başlarken*, İstanbul: Milliyet, 1970, 65, cited in Akçam, Taner, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu. İttihad ve Terakki'den Kurtulus Savaşı'na*, Ankara: Imge, 1999, 179).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Bilgi 1997, 46.

Let us take a closer look at the *Balıkesir Notları*. On the first day in İvrindi, he notes, “The [local] *Rumlar* have stayed perfectly *Rum*, made rich thanks to the Balya [mining] Company.”<sup>38</sup> The following day in Edremit he accused the *kaymakam* of being “too closely and disagreeably connected with the [Orthodox] metropolitan.” With regard to the villages, he writes, “In this region, the villagers [Muslims] do relatively well. But they cannot duly profit from their produce or, better said, from their hard work. The monopolists and oppressors [*Rum*] do not permit them to open their eyes.” Here once again, the social cleavage which the author denounces is also seen in terms of ethnic opposition. Continuing, he writes, “In Edremit, a national and a commercial sentiment have awakened. A rivalry directed against the Christians has arisen.”<sup>39</sup> What also disturbs the modernity projected by Reşid is the nomad phenomenon. “Here [in the region of Ilıca] there are Wallachs, coming from Teselya as nomads.... By the fact that they are mobile and nomadic, they constitute a risk to security. Some of them work as sawyers. They must all be expelled.”<sup>40</sup>

Ayvalık appealed to Dr Reşid, but it was “unfortunately a Greek [*Yunan*] city. The city is extremely prosperous, very ordered, the houses are very pretty. But the inhabitants are generally *Rum*. The writings in the shops are Greek [*Rumca*]; even the street names are Greek. The government has not been paying enough attention here.”<sup>41</sup> To counter the weight of the *Rumlar*, he suggested as an urgent measure to “attach a few Muslim villages to the *kaza* and to establish active and prosperous [Muslim] traders and farmers on the territory of the *kasaba*. He considered it “necessary that in Ayvalık, the police officers were not indigenous non-Muslims, but that they still knew the [Greek] language.” What he found particularly “detestable” was the fact that the town hall building was the property of the metropolitan. On Yunda, an exclusively *Rum* island near Ayvalık, the *mutasarrıf* deemed it “reasonable to introduce suitable immigrants [*muhacir*] there. Establishing a business-oriented and prosperous colony of Muslims who know the olive trade will help in keeping an eye on the *Rumlar* [*Rumluk*].”<sup>42</sup> At the next halt in his journey, in Burhaniye, “a *kasaba* of 1700 houses, of which around 700 are *Rum* houses”, he once again

---

<sup>38</sup> Reşid, *Balıkesir Notları*, 65.

<sup>39</sup> Reşid, *Balıkesir Notları*, 66.

<sup>40</sup> Reşid, *Balıkesir Notları*, 68.

<sup>41</sup> Reşid, *Balıkesir Notları*, 69.

<sup>42</sup> Reşid, *Balıkesir Notları*, 70.

complained of the fact that “unfortunately,” the *Rumlar* were in control of commerce.<sup>43</sup> A visit to the Balya Company confirmed his anti-*Rum* views. “The top management is made up of a few strangers, generally *Rumlar* and in particular, Greeks [*Yunanlı*], the lower employees are Laz, Kurds and Turks.” In order better to control the firm, he deemed it appropriate to “dismiss the secretary general of the firm, Prodromos, the chief engineer Kokitos and the head worker.”<sup>44</sup> He henceforth appeared to conceptualize late Ottoman society in sweeping antagonistic categories of Islam and Turkishness versus Christianity, *Rumluk* and *Ermenilik* [Armenians].

The anti-Christian discourse, fed by social envy, became even more radical with regard to the Armenians portrayed as leeches of the Muslim element.<sup>45</sup> According to him, as secretaries and bookkeepers to sheikhs, aghas and Kurdish beys, they have subjected the latter “to the slavery of their economy”. As to the acts of violence committed by the tribes, in his eyes the first victims were the Muslim villagers, while the Armenians remain unscathed due to “the toadyism and base flattery peculiar to them.” We see here the same set of arguments as can be found in the anti-Semitism of the time. We find also the specter of biologism. In their “prosperous and fortunate” villages, the Armenians increase their population. Contrary to official İttihadist statistics careful to show a decreasing number of Armenians, Dr Reşid insisted the Armenian population was growing and used this as an argument against claims that they were being persecuted. Contradicting his and the CUP's own earlier sayings, he suppressed his knowledge about the anti-Armenian mass crimes of the 1890s.

His categories blended together “the enemy” of race, class and religion, as did most Turkists in the 1910s. “Due to privileges too easily given, and also due to their own initiative,” wrote the Turkist and later Kemalist writer Moiz Kohen Tekinalp, the Christians of Asia Minor were “always more prosperous, increasingly driving out the true masters [sic!] of the land”. According to Tekinalp, the Armenians had “enriched themselves thanks to their good relations with the English.” With regard to the sacred goal of a national economy, *millî iktisad*, he ascertained with satisfaction, and without the slightest remorse that the widespread boycott

---

<sup>43</sup> Reşid, *Balıkesir Notları*, 71.

<sup>44</sup> Reşid, *Balıkesir Notları*, 75.

<sup>45</sup> “İslam unsurunun kanını emmekdedirler” – in a text from the end of 1918 which retrospectively refers to Reşid's experiences in Diyarbakir, Dr Reşid Reşid, *Mülâhazât*, 97–99.

movement (carried out before the secret expulsions in the first half of 1914) had “ruined hundreds of Greek and Armenian tradesmen.”<sup>46</sup>

Unlike earlier cases, Mehmed Reşid does not seem to have ended his time in office in Karesi after falling out with local notables or regional authorities. He did pride himself on having removed the *Rumlar* without giving rise to protest.<sup>47</sup> It was to the perfect satisfaction of the central government that he appeared to have fulfilled his task of organizing the deportations and grappling with infrastructural modernization. He found himself promoted to the rank of *vali* in July 1914, while at the same time his close party comrade, the minister of the interior, Tâlât Pasha, proposed a particularly delicate post to him. In a letter of July 19, 1914, Tâlât insisted on offering him the charge of “secretary general of the inspectorate of the provinces of Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, and Mamuretülaziz,” while commending his devotion, his capabilities and his efficiency.<sup>48</sup> The international reform plan for the six Eastern Provinces, signed by the Porte under diplomatic pressure – also from Germany – on February 8, 1914, made provisions for two powerful inspectors from neutral countries. They were to control the process of reform, designed to stabilize the fragile coexistence of ethnic groups, enable the participation of all groups in regional politics, and establish a functioning rule of law.

But this plan ran counter to the CUP's will to centralization, full sovereignty and Turkist “nationalization” of Anatolia at the expense of the regions and the Christians. Indeed, the plan was rigorously denounced by the CUP as a first step toward Armenian autonomy, which would finally lead to Russian annexation. It was therefore necessary to hinder the imposed inspectorate as much as possible. The person best suitable for this task was Dr Reşid. Yet he would not take up his new office. The First World War offered the opportunity to get rid of the embarrassing question of reforms, which had been persistently raised diplomatically ever since the Congress of Berlin (1878).<sup>49</sup> On August 13, 1914, three days before his superior, Inspector General Hoff,

---

<sup>46</sup> Alp, Tekin, *Türkismus und Pantürkismus*, Weimar: Verlag Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1915, 39–40 and 62 (“Tekinalp” became Moiz Kohen alias Tekin Alp Bey's later family name in the Republic of Turkey).

<sup>47</sup> Bilgi 1997, 22.

<sup>48</sup> Letter partly cited in Bilgi 1997, 22.

<sup>49</sup> “Fortunately World War One broke out thus preventing the implementation of that harmful [reform] project”, a member of the Turkish Historical Society later wrote, who was an



would be called back from Van, and without a replacement being appointed, Reşid Bey was named *vali* of Diyarbakır.<sup>50</sup>

He immediately saw himself placed into other postings closer to the front: From September 10, he was *vali* of Basra, which fell on November 20.<sup>51</sup> From November 24, 1914 until December 25 he was vice *vali* of Baghdad, probably to keep an eye on the *vali*, Süleyman Nazif, a critic of the régime.<sup>52</sup> “At that point I found the *mutasarrıf* of Lazistan to have changed!... Instead of the old poised character and calm, there was an appalling arrogance and anger,” wrote the old *vali* in 1919, remembering that month in 1914.<sup>53</sup> From January 10 to February 25, 1915, Dr Reşid was *vali* of Mossul. Finally, he replaced Governor Hamid (Kapancı) Bey, whose *valilik* in Diyarbakır from September 17, 1914 to March 25, 1915 was distinguished by a relatively tolerant policy toward the Armenians, contrary to the wishes of the CUP.<sup>54</sup> Reşid Bey’s judgment of Hamid Bey was harsh. “My predecessor did not govern. Totally indifferent, and giving himself to pleasure and amusement, he threw the affairs of the

---

employee of the Ministry of the Interior in 1914: Tankut, Hasan Reşit, “Doğu ve Güneydoğu Bölgesi Üzerine Etno-Politik Bir İnceleme”, in M. Bayrak, *Açık-Gizli/ Resmi-Gayriresmi Kürdoloji Belgeleri*, 218–232, Ankara: Özge, 1994 (1961), here 219. Cf. Djemal, Ahmed, *Erinnerungen eines türkischen Staatsmannes*, München, 1922, 337–354, and Talât, (A. Kabacalı, ed.), *Talât Paşa'nın Hâtıraları*, Istanbul, 1994 (1946), 58–71.

<sup>50</sup> Bilgi 1997, 23; cf. Kieser, Hans-Lukas, *Der verpasste Friede. Mission, Ethnie und Staat in den Ostprovinzen der Türkei 1839–1938*, Zürich: Chronos, 2000, 444.

<sup>51</sup> Erickson, Edward, J., *Ordered to die, A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*, Westport (Connecticut): Greenwood, 2001, 67.

<sup>52</sup> Süleyman Nazif, son of Said Pasha of Diyarbakır, resigned from his post in Baghdad in December 1915 and dedicated himself to journalism and literature (Uçman, Abdullah, “Süleyman Nazif”, *Osmanlılar Ansiklopedisi*, Istanbul: Yapı Kredi, 1999).

<sup>53</sup> Süleyman Nazif, “Doktor Reşid”, *Hadisat*, 8 Şubat 1919, cited in Bilgi 1997, 169.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Çankaya, Ali, *Mülkiye ve Mülkiyeler*, Ankara: Mars Matbaası, 1968–1969, vol. 3, 956; Beysanoğlu, Şevket, *Diyarbakır Tarihi*, vol. 2, Ankara: Irmak Matbaası, 1998, 788; Bilgi 1997, 25 and 78.

government into great chaos, and reduced the state's hold to zero.”<sup>55</sup> Dr Reşid governed the province of Diyarbakır until March 2, 1916.

A functionary and party member who had been radicalized in his thoughts and actions since 1909 and deeply frustrated by the first months of the war, became governor of Diyarbakır in 1915. According to his own words, he “removed” 120,000 Armenians from his province, of which the majority were massacred, or died from exhaustion.<sup>56</sup> This figure is nearly double the official Ottoman number of Armenians in the province of Diyarbakır.<sup>57</sup> It corresponds roughly with that given by contemporary observers for the autochthonous Christians killed in the province.<sup>58</sup>

What happened in Diyarbakır was already evident from testimony from foreign observers who were political friends of the Ottoman Empire. On July 31, 1915, the German ambassador in Constantinople informed the Chancellor of the Reich, Bethmann Hollweg, in Berlin of the murder of the Christians, saying, “Since the beginning of this month, the *vali* of Diyarbakır, Reşid Bey, has begun the systematic extermination of the Christian population in his province, without distinguishing between race or creed.”<sup>59</sup> Why did the *vali* act in this way? A few months later, he explained himself during a conversation in Constantinople with Mithat Şükrü (Bleda), secretary general of Union and Progress at the time. His words express open social envy, an

---

<sup>55</sup> Reşid, *Mülâhazât*, 102.

<sup>56</sup> In a telegram of 5 Eylül 1331 (18 September 1915) from Diyarbekir to the Ministry of the Interior, see *Armenians in Ottoman Documents (1915–1920)*, Ankara: The Turkish Prime Ministry General Directorate of the State Archives, 1995, 105. In *Memleket*, 29 Nisan 1919, is cited, according to Bilgi 1997, 28, a similar telegram of 15 Eylül 1331 (28 September 1915).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. McCarthy, Justin, *Muslims and minorities: the population of Ottoman Anatolia and the end of the Empire*, New York University Press, 1983, 69–70. The official Ottoman number is 73'226, McCarthy gives a recitified number of 89'131. Cf. Cuinet, Vital, *La Turquie d'Asie*, vol. 2, Paris, 1892, 412.

<sup>58</sup> 144'000 disappeared during the persecutions in 1915/16, most of them killed (Ternon 2002, 185–87).

<sup>59</sup> PA-AA/R14086; see Wolfgang Gust's online edition <http://www.armenocide.de> or Lepsius, Johannes (ed.), *Deutschland und Armenien 1914 – 1918: Sammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücke*, Potsdam: Tempelverlag, 1919, document 126.

obsession with a general conspiracy, and the Social Darwinist idea that it was necessary to kill collectively in order collectively to survive. “We will liquidate them before they eliminate us.” There is the vision of a politically poisoned Armenian people, extending to a dehumanizing image of Armenian “bandits” and “microbes” within the “organism of the fatherland.” To eliminate them was the duty with which the *vali* Dr Reşid saw himself to be charged. Explicitly, he abandoned the medical code of ethics where the salvation of Turkishness was concerned.

Either they us, or we them. In this situation, I thought to myself: “Hey, Dr Reşid! There are two alternatives: Either the Armenians will liquidate the Turks, or the Turks will liquidate them!”... Faced with the necessity of having to choose, I did not hesitate for long. My Turkishness triumphed over my identity as a doctor. Before they do away with us, we will get rid of them, I said to myself.... But I did not accomplish this deed either to satisfy my personal pride or to enrich myself. I had seen that the fatherland [*vatan*] was about to be lost, therefore, I proceeded eyes closed and without consideration, convinced that I was acting for the welfare of the nation. If my own [national] history were to call me to account for this, my conduct – nothing doing. The history of other peoples may write about me what it will, it does not trouble me in the least.... The Armenian bandits were a load of harmful microbes that had afflicted the body of the fatherland. Was it not the duty of the doctor to kill the microbes?<sup>60</sup>

When Reşid Bey arrived in Diyarbakır at the end of March 1915, he was confronted with a situation difficult in several regards. The state had little authority, the security forces were weak, the population was agitated and anxious, while the large number of deserters, Muslims and non-Muslims, made internal security problems more acute. The Muslims feared an invasion by the Russians, who had been victorious since the Ottoman defeat at Sarıkamış, while on the western front, the British were preparing the invasion of Gallipoli. What was feared by some was a hope to others. The Christians had suffered the most from frequently brutal requisitions since general mobilization in August 1914. Their stores in the bazaar in Diyarbakır had been burnt and looted on August 19, 1914.<sup>61</sup> The memory of the great massacres of the end of the century was still fresh. To many Armenians and especially the young people, a good number of whom were

---

<sup>60</sup> Güngör 1953, 2444–45.

<sup>61</sup> Ternon 2002, 83. Cf. Kieser 2000, 335–336.

deserters, the abolition of the reform plan for the Eastern Provinces and the voluntary entry into the war on the side of Germany had destroyed any acceptable prospect of life under the regime currently in place, whose downfall they were hoping for. Sometimes, they audaciously expressed their views in the streets or in the cafés. They were aware of the disarming of the Armenian soldiers, separated into work battalions since February and exposed to massacre. Aggravating the situation in the provinces was the fact that, ever since the centralizing reforms of the *Tanzimat*, the tribes, mostly Kurdish but also Nestorian, were rebellious and the institution of the state did not function properly in their region.

Mehmed Reşid learned of the great number of Armenian deserters (he does not mention the numerous Muslim deserters). He was appalled by the fact that they moved freely even in the city. They were impertinent in his eyes, and he thought he heard them say, in the hope of a rapid Russian breakthrough: “Up to now, you have been the ruling nation [*millet-i hâkime*], but now it is for us to dominate, and for you to be subjugated.”<sup>62</sup> He saw or believed to see them as well armed, organized and conspiring to stage a general rebellion. In equal manner, an important number of Muslims in the city were also seized by the specter of a Christian conspiracy. These he ably succeeded in submitting to his will and organizing, before he delivered a fatal blow to the Christian minority. More than fear, however, it was probably booty that compelled them to line up behind, or even urge on the new *vali*. If Süleyman Nazif is to be believed, many Muslims feared him and hated him for his brutality. According to Nazif, it was exclusively the lower masses, together with the militia and policemen brought in from outside, who participated in pillaging and murdering the Armenians. “I have learned with satisfaction that in Diyarbakır, not a single notable has been involved in the matters of deportation and massacre”, Süleyman Nazif wrote in 1919.<sup>63</sup>

This however is not entirely true. Rather it is a statement typical of the months after the First World War, when Muslim patriots, among them Nazif, made up the Association for the Defense of the National Rights in the Eastern Provinces. The propaganda of this Association had an interest in placing all blame on Dr Reşid and the men he brought with him. The fact is that several local notables had closely collaborated with the *vali*, among them Pirinççizâde Feyzi and Cemilpaşazâde Mustafa, both sons of local dignitaries and responsible of the anti-Armenian

---

<sup>62</sup> Reşid, *Mülâhazât*, 102. For the recurring use of “cüret” (audacity, impertinence), see e.g. 99.

<sup>63</sup> “Doktor Reşid”, *Hadisat*, 8 Şubat 1919, in Bilgi 1997, 167–171, here 171.

massacres in 1895. That earlier massacre, as well as the existence of a self-assured local committee called Young Turk (of which by the way young Nazif had been a propelling ideologist), not to mention a long, strongly anti-Armenian telegram defying the sultan that had been sent to the sultan by this committee on November 4, 1895, all suggest a powerful long-term anti-Christian potential and agency in Diarbekir. This has to be considered as a factor for the particularly murderous outcome in that province, beside reasons related to Dr Reşid himself.

Several of the notables cooperating with Dr Reşid threw their lot in with the nationalist organization put up in 1919.<sup>64</sup> This is true, for example, of Pirinçizâde Feyzi, a deputy of the Ottoman parliament and representative of the CUP club in the city. Together with a second deputy of Diyarbakır, Zulfi Bey, he had agitated for the dismissal of the moderate *vali*, Hamid. As his interview with the British vice-consul of Diyarbakır on August 27, 1914 demonstrates, Feyzi believed in a funny mixture of Panislamism and Panturkism, hoping – like Enver – miracles from the war to come. If the Armenians were really loyal, he said, they would instigate rebellion against Russian rule in the Caucasus in favor of the Ottomans. In a language similar to that of other high CUP members in 1914, he openly threatened the Armenians with destruction.<sup>65</sup> He was vice-president of the local High Council, which the new *vali* founded and presided over, and organized the murder of deportees by Kurdish tribes. Thus at the end of May 1915 he seems to have made a trip to the region of Djezireh (Cizre), bargained there with Kurdish chiefs and finally taken with him as aides-de-camps Amaro and Mustafa, the sons of the late Ibrahim Pasha, head of the tribal confederation of the Milli. Whereas Ibrahim had protected all Christians under his influence during the pogroms of 1895, Amaro's men were organized as murderers of the deportees.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Beysanoğlu 1992, 786–860; the transcribed telegram is on 727–729; a list of the notables closely cooperating with Dr Reşid is on 793–94. For the roles of Cemil Pasha and Pirincizâde Arif see Meyrier, Gustave, *Les massacres de Diarbékir: correspondance diplomatique du Vice-Consul de France 1894-1896*, présentée et annotée par Claire Mouradian, Paris: L'Inventaire, 2000, 172, 185, 186, 216; designation of the committee as Young Turk see 170. As far as I understand, Mustafa Cemilpaşazâde, colonel and chief of Dr Reşid's milice, was the son of Cemil Pasha, former governor of Yemen.

<sup>65</sup> Extracts of the interview in Ternon 2002, 351.

<sup>66</sup> Ternon 2002, 86, 89–90, 281.

Dr Reşid had brought with him a loyal troop of around 30 men, mainly Circassians. It was a strike force, probably linked to the *Teşkilat-i Mahsusa*.<sup>67</sup> They were joined by the policemen already there. Furthermore, a militia of about a thousand volunteers, partly criminals, was organized under the command of Cemilpaşazâde Mustafa.<sup>68</sup> Strengthened by this support, the *vali* succeeded in searching all the Armenian houses in the city, arrested hundreds of deserters, and confiscated a large quantity of arms.<sup>69</sup> In perfect keeping with what had been organized in the cities of other provinces, the *vali* of Diyarbakır demanded the immediate surrender of the deserters and their arms, and, in order to intimidate and paralyze the Armenians, had the heads of the community arrested and tortured. Among the 1600 notables arrested in April and at the beginning of May, there were also Assyrians.

On May 25, 1915 the *müfti* (religious official) listed the names of the prisoners that had been assembled in the court of the prison and read them a telegram from the capital that announced their deportation to Mosul.<sup>70</sup> According to one source, the *müfti* Ibrahim and the *kadi* Necib asked in the following decisive meeting of the High Council to spare the Armenian children from the planned comprehensive destruction by converting them to Islam. But Dr Reşid Feyzi, Zülfi and others were opposed.<sup>71</sup> In June, when the general deportation began, the *müfti* succeeded, however, in convincing several families to apostatize in order to save their lives. According to the Dominican missionary J. Rhétoré, 350 Armenian families of the Gregorian (Armenian Apostolic) faith, 25 Armenian Catholic, and 12 Chaldean families converted. For each conversion the family of the *müfti* was said to have received an considerable sum of

---

<sup>67</sup> Reşid, *Mülâhazât*, 89. Cf. Nesimi, Abidin, *Yılların İçinden*, İstanbul: Gözlem yay., 1977, 39–40.

<sup>68</sup> Reşid, *Mülâhazât*, 103 and 107, cf. Bilgi 1997, 26.

<sup>69</sup> Reşid, *Mülâhazât*, pp. 104–105.

<sup>70</sup> Ternon 2002, 88.

<sup>71</sup> *Faits et documents. Episodes des massacres arméniens de Diarbékir*, Constantinople: Imprimerie G. Kéchichian fils, 1920, 31–35, cited in Ternon 2002, 92.

money.<sup>72</sup> But these Islamized families were, nevertheless, later deported in agreement with the explicit policy of the ministry of the interior.<sup>73</sup>

A witness by the name of Floyd Smith, a doctor associated with American missionaries (the ABCFM) in Diyarbakır since 1913, describes the searches and arrests as follows: “The police in searching houses took anything they wished. Books and papers were sure to bring condemnation to a household. Rape of women was a common accompaniment of police research. Finally the prisons were full and Typhus began. – It had been present throughout the winter in the city.”<sup>74</sup> Right up to the first weeks of the *valilik* of Reşid, Dr Smith enjoyed intact relations with the government. Afterwards, the *vali* refused any meeting with the “colleague”. Because of his work, Dr Smith was perfectly aware of what was happening in the Christian quarter. He confirms the government’s precarious position in view of the general problem of desertion before the arrival of Mehmed Reşid:

During the winter many Armenians had evaded military service by means of the roofs. (One who knows Diyarbakır realises that it is possible for an expert to go at all over the city and not descend unto the street.) A far larger force of police than was at hand would have been necessary to apprehend these men. They finally became so confident of their ability to avoid capture that they played cards etc. almost under the *Vali*’s nose (this was the first *vali* [Hamid Bey] we had during

---

<sup>72</sup> Rhétoré, J., *Les chrétiens aux bêtes! Souvenirs de la guerre sainte proclamée par les Turcs contre les chrétiens en 1915*, manuscript in the Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Paris, 35–36, cited in Ternon 2002, 94.

<sup>73</sup> Telegram of 20 July 1915, BOA DH.ŞFR 54-A/49.

<sup>74</sup> The *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission*, the strongest and best established missionary organization in Asia Minor during the last Ottoman decades. Dr Smith mentions several Christian notables having been tortured and finally killed. Many died from typhus. He could not get access to the suffering people. “Metassian, the representative of the Standard Oil, was taken down in prison.... They refused me admittance [into the prison] rather rudely asking what business I had there. One of the guards said: ‘Let him die like a dog.’ He died that same afternoon.” [Letter to James Barton, Vevey (Switzerland), 18 September 1915, 3–4, Archives of the ABCFM, Houghton Library, Boston, ABC 16.9.7 (reel 716: 436)]

our stay). He at last became incensed and gave the Gregorian Bishop [Tchilgadian] to understand that unless these men surrendered, drastic measures would be undertaken. On the strength of this the Bishop and the Dragoman of the vilayet [Dikran Ilvanian] went upon the roofs and lectured the men, telling them that they were bringing ruin upon themselves and the whole Christian quarter. As a result quite a number surrendered. This occurred the last of February.

Floyd Smith makes it clear to what extent the situation worsened with the arrival of the new governor:

The *vali* was superseded early in March.<sup>75</sup> By getting a large force of police and gendarmes the new *vali* [Reşid Bey] succeeded in apprehending the larger part of these men. He soon started the imprisonment of prominent Armenians using as justification the false statement that they were sheltering deserters.... Then a search for arms was made and several bombs unearthed, some rifles and ammunition found. Evidently there was a revolutionary committee and some ideas in some heads of doing things, but I am sure that the large majority of Christians were opposed to any such proceedings. Most people had weapons in their houses in remembrance of the event of twenty years ago, but I feel positive that there was no idea of a general uprising. About the first of April a proclamation was posted demanding arms. Men were imprisoned right and left and tortured to make them confess the presence and place of concealments of arms. Some went mad under the torture.<sup>76</sup>

Confessions of some sort were extracted. An Armenian close to the ABCFM was made to sign an absurd document saying that the ABCFM was preparing an insurrection in Diyarbakır and that its “agent”, Dr Smith, was an Armenian.<sup>77</sup> According to what he wrote in 1918, Dr Reşid seems to have believed the shocking “confessions” extracted under torture. Recently published minutes

---

<sup>75</sup> Officially on 25 March only.

<sup>76</sup> Letter to James Barton, Vevey (Switzerland), 18 September 1915, 2–3, ABC 16.9.7 (reel 716: 434–436).

<sup>77</sup> Reşid Bey had persons from the entourage of Dr Smith tortured and one of them sign that “1. I (Dr Smith) am an Armenian, 2. I (Dr Smith) was Maynard’s agent to incite insurrection in Diyarbekir as at Van.” Smith’s letter to Barton, Vevey, 25 August 1915, ABC 16.9.7.



of those interrogations give, between the lines, moving insights into the despair and disunity of the local Armenians.<sup>78</sup>

Even in the extreme case of mass murder in the province of Diyarbakır in 1915, where the border line between victims and perpetrators was ethno-religiously given, the perpetrators wanted that some representatives of the targeted group admit to have concretely acted as traitors against the existing order. Contrary to Turkish apologetic schemas, the Van “rebellion” after April 20, 1915 could not serve as “proff” for the Armenians' general uprising and thus argument for their removal, since the systematic anti-Armenian persecution in Diyarbakır simply began earlier. The prisoners who did not die under torture were massacred after the end of May, when the full-scale liquidation of the Christians commenced. Expelled, Dr Smith was made to leave before the final drama started. The government confiscated the property of the ABCFM within the city.<sup>79</sup> The rapid and voluntary deterioration of intact relations between local functionaries and the ABCFM, an organization rooted in the *vilayet* of Diyarbakır for three generations, is a strong sign of the negative “new spirit” that the emissaries of the CUP brought with them to the Eastern Provinces in the Spring of 1915.<sup>80</sup>

In application of the Law on abandoned property of 25 May 1915, Dr Reşid founded a commission for the administration of the deportees' property. As in other places, instead of its declared goal, i.e. protection, the commission served to transfer the Christian goods to the Muslims – “mass murder cum robbery” (Christian Gerlach). Contrary to the régime's intention however, the members of the High Council profited the most.<sup>81</sup> On May 30, 1915, the arrested Christian representatives of the provincial capital were brought to the Tigris near the town, put on *kelek* (rafts) on the Tigris and several days later slaughtered at agreed places. Walter Holstein, the German vice consul in Mosul, told the embassy what was happening in the neighboring province. On June 10, Holstein wrote:

---

<sup>78</sup> T. C. Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, Arşiv belgeleriyle Ermeni faaliyetleri 1914–1918/ Armenian activities in the archive documents 1914–1918, Ankara: Genelkurmay Basım Evi, 2005, vol. 1, 235-81.

<sup>79</sup> Smith's letter to Barton, Rowley (Iowa), 20 Septembre 1917, ABC 16.9.7.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Dr Smith's (Diyarbekir) and Dr Thom's (who had lived for 40 years at Mardin) letters to Barton from 1914 to March 1915, ABC 16.9.7 (reels 716 and 717).

<sup>81</sup> *Faits et documents* 1920, 45–48, cited in Ternon 2002, 95.

614 Armenian men, women and children banished from Diyarbakır have all been slaughtered on the journey here by raft; Keleks arrived here empty yesterday; for a few days now, corpses and human members have been floating by in the river. Further transports of Armenian ‘emigrants’ are on the way here, with the same fate awaiting them. I have expressed my deepest revulsion toward these crimes to the local government; the local vali expresses his regret, noting that the vali of Diyarbakır alone bears responsibility.... The massacre of the Armenians in the vilayet of Diyarbakır is becoming increasingly known here and is creating growing unrest among the local population, which can easily give rise to unforeseen consequences in face of the incomprehensible irresponsibility and weakness of the local government. In the districts of Mardin and Amadia, conditions have developed into a true persecution of Christians.<sup>82</sup>

The *vali* now had the community stripped of its leaders and began to dispatch it (*sevkiyat* [dispatchment] was the official term for the “deportations”). In June, thousands of people of the provincial capital, among them the 3750 Gregorian families, followed a handful of policemen. A great number of them were massacred on their way inside the province; a few passed through Mardin.<sup>83</sup> Simultaneously, the *vali* turned to the other towns and villages of his province. Often, as in Djézire, this meant the nearly complete massacre of the Christian population, without the effort of organizing deportations. Two *kaymakams*, Nesimi Bey of the district of Lice and Sabit Bey of the district of Beşiri, who opposed the policy of the *vali*, were ambushed and assassinated.

---

<sup>82</sup> This dispatch very probably concerns the murder of the notables deported on 30 May (cf. Ternon 2002, 89–80, 281–82), but seems to blend it together with simultaneous murders (therefore the mention of women and children). 10 June 1915, Walter Holstein, German Vice-Consul in Mosul to the Embassy in Constantinople, PA-AA/BoKon/169 (Lepsius 1919, doc. 78 and 80).

<sup>83</sup> The Dominican Pater Hyacinthe Simon in Mardin reported a group of 510 deportees passing through Mardin, but killed soon after at Dara on 13 July 1915 (Hyacinthe Simon, *Mardine, la ville héroïque. Autel et tombeau de l'Arménie (Asie Mineure) durant les massacres de 1915*, manuscript in the Bibliothèque du Saulchoir, Paris, 137–38, cited in Ternon 2002, 96).

Lice was the only place invaded some months later by the Russian army. Armenian soldiers of its vanguard were said to have then committed acts of revenge against the Muslim population.<sup>84</sup>

The German diplomatic service mentions *vali* Reşid several times already in June 1915, informing the embassy in Constantinople of the general massacres of Armenian men, women and children then in progress in the province of Diyarbakır. In July, German diplomacy began attending to the matter of *vali* Reşid on a higher level. On July 12, 1915, the ambassador in Constantinople, Wangenheim, gave the following note in French to the minister of the interior, Tâlât : “The German Embassy has just learned the following from a reliable source: The *vali* of Diyarbakır, Reşid Bey, has recently organized regular massacres among the Christian population in his district, without distinguishing between Armenians and Christians belonging to other denominations, and without worrying about whether they were guilty or innocent.... Under the orders of Reşid Bey, policemen from Diyarbakır went to Mardin and there arrested the Armenian bishop together with a large number of Armenians and other Christians, 700 people in total; all of them were driven to a place outside the city during the night and slaughtered like sheep. The total number of the victims of these massacres is estimated at 2000 souls. If the Imperial Government does not take measures against Reşid Bey, it must be feared that the lower classes of the Muslim population from the surrounding *vilayets* might themselves rise up to indulge in a general massacre of all Christian inhabitants.”<sup>85</sup>

This intervention by the embassy seems to have been the consequence of a dispatch by Holstein of July 10, which had demanded the immediate removal of the *vali* of Diyarbakır.<sup>86</sup> But Tâlât simply passed over the German “meddling.” It is true that on the same day (July 12), he conveyed the German note, partly word for word, to his subordinate comrade, and urged him not

---

<sup>84</sup> Rhétoré, 49, cited in Ternon 2002, 103. On Lice in 1915 see also Naayem, J., *Les Assyro-chaldéens et les Arméniens massacrés par les Turcs. Documents inédits recueillis par un témoin oculaire*, Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1920. Naaman Efendi was director of the *Dette Publique* at Lice.

<sup>85</sup> PA-AA/BoKon/169 (Lepsius 1919, doc. 112); note of Johannes Mordtmann, Generalkonsul in Konstantinopel: “am 12/7 persönlich an Talaat bej übergeben.” Cf. also the dispatch already cited to the Reichskanzler on 31 July 1915.

<sup>86</sup> 10 July 1915, Walter Holstein, deutscher Vizekonsul in Mossul an die Botschaft in Konstantinopel, DE/PA-AA/BoKon/169 (cf. Lepsius 1919, doc. 110).

to apply the anti-Armenian measures to the other Christians. What unsettled the minister of the interior when confronted with the German reaction was the bad publicity and also the fact that Reşid was applying to the Assyrians the same “disciplinary measures [*tedâbir-i inzibâtiye*] intended for the Armenians,” as Tâlât calls them in the encrypted telegram. In this respect the boss harshly criticized his subordinate in a second telegram of July 20, 1915, urging him to stop the indiscriminate anti-Christian measures that were “very detrimental to the country.”<sup>87</sup> It seems that Tâlât's telegram of July 12 resulted in an amnesty for the non-Armenian Christians. But this did not last long and was, according to Rhéroré, an opportunity for the local rulers to extort more money from those hoping to be granted an amnesty.<sup>88</sup>

The ally's diplomats could not, or would not, understand that, basically, the *vali* of Diyarbakır had been acting by mutual agreement with his superior from the outset. By the time of the illegal expulsion of the *Rumlar* during the first half of 1914, Tâlât had already successfully concealed a policy that he would not acknowledge in front of the foreign diplomats. On August 14, 1915, Holstein unsuccessfully reiterated his demand for the removal of Reşid Bey and called “the atrocities officially committed in the province of Diyarbakır” historically unique.<sup>89</sup>

The persecutions continued until the month of September. A telegram from the embassy to the foreign ministry of September 10, 1915 confirmed the general fact of the central government's two policies, one official, one concealed, as well as the direct implication of the regular army in the massacre of the Armenians. In particular, the telegram highlighted two characteristics of the extermination in Diyarbakır under Governor Reşid: In this case, it affected all Christians, not just the Armenians, and it included men, women and children. Compared to other governors who usually had the men massacred on the spot, and the women and children

---

<sup>87</sup> BOA DH.ŞFR, no. 54/406, 12 July 1915, transcribed in *Ottoman Documents*, 75. Cf. Akçam's deliberations (1999, see fn. 61, 25–26). DH. ŞFR no. 54-A /248, 20 July 1915.

<sup>88</sup> Rhéroré, 37, cited in Ternon 2002, 96, cf. 97.

<sup>89</sup> 14 August 1915, Walter Holstein, German Vice-Consul in Mosul to the Embassy in Constantinople, PA-AA/BoKon/170 (Lepsius 1919, doc. 139). In an earlier dispatch, Holstein refers to the murder of the *kaymakam* of Midyat (cf. Reşid Mülâhazât, 85), and estimates a very low percentage of survivors among the deportees: 16 July 1915, Walter Holstein, deutscher Vizekonsul in Mossul an die Botschaft in Konstantinopel, PA-AA/BoKon/169 (cf. Lepsius 1919, doc. 115).

deported to the camps in Syria, the *vali* of Diyarbakır carried out a program of maximal killing; unlike other provinces, he did not seem to distinguish between Syriac and Armenian Christians.<sup>90</sup>

The weeding out of Christian communities went on until autumn. On September 28, 1915, the *vali* sent a telegram to the minister of the interior, stating that he had removed 120,000 Armenians from his province.<sup>91</sup> On October 19, 1915, a friend named Halil Edib, vice governor of the district of Mardin, sent Reşid Bey his congratulations for the *kurban bayramı* by telegraph from Mardin, saying, “I kiss your hands, you who have gained us the six [eastern] provinces and you have opened to us access to Turkestan and to the Caucasus.”<sup>92</sup> He somewhat exaggerated the “salutary” Panturanist effects of the *vali*’s deeds. This telegram nevertheless is a clue to the strong Panturanist views of this friend of the *vali* and the *vali* himself.

*Vali* Dr Reşid was responsible, or at least co-responsible, of the murder of two *kaymakams* who opposed the anti-Armenian policy, even if, under the threat of the tribunal, he vividly defended himself in his *Mülâhazât* against the accusation of having organized the assassinations.<sup>93</sup> His incredible version of the two murders and his conceited tone, moreover, cast a dark shadow onto the intellectual honesty of the author of this long text, the bulk of which concerns the Armenians. In the minutes of the police interrogations, recently published, there is no evidence of a general Armenian plan of massacring the Muslims, as he contended. That evil powers called Armenians wanted to annihilate the Ottoman nation was the *idée fixe* of his

---

<sup>90</sup> Ambassador Hohenlohe-Langenburg to the German Foreign Office, 11 September 1915, PA-AA/BoKon/170 (Lepsius 1919, doc. 167).

<sup>91</sup> *Ottoman Documents*, 105.

<sup>92</sup> Cited in Bilgi 1997, 29. For more on Halil Edib see Üngör 2006, 73.

<sup>93</sup> Reşid, *Mülâhazât*, 79–91. Abidin Nesimî Bey, son of Hüseyin Nesimî Bey (the liberal *kaymakam* of Lice, murdered in 1915), wrote in his memoirs: “He [Reşid Bey] invited him to Diyarbekir and had him killed by ordering a band of Tcherkess Harun, part of the Special Organization, to lay an ambush.” Nesimi, Abidin, *Yılların İçinden*, İstanbul: Gözlem yayınları, 1977, 39–40. Cited in Aktar, Ayhan, “Osmanlı Meclisi Ermeni meselesini tartışıyor. Kasım–Aralık 1918”, *Görüş*, İstanbul: TÜSİAD, August 2001, 42–54, here 52.

radicalized mind.<sup>94</sup> There are nevertheless some pertinent elements in his *Mülâhazât*: He himself did not know the terrain; he had few trained security forces; there was great fear among the Muslims of losing their position as a ruling group; the situation in the province was chaotic; in short, an orderly evacuation of 120,000 Armenians was impossible from the outset.

An incontestable point is the fact of Reşid's hatred against the Christians, particularly the Armenians, by the time he arrived at Diyarbakır. Linked with this was an attitude that made clear to all his subordinates that the death of the group designated as traitors was legitimate and necessary for the sake of nation and religion. It was not always necessary to give specific orders – his entourage knew what Dr Reşid and the CUP wanted. It could anticipate what they would order and what they would welcome. Such a picture corresponds with findings on how the Shoah really began in Eastern Europe in 1941-1942. It shows the importance of local agencies whose murderous actions were only possible because they were in agreement with superiors in the center. The ideological articulation had prepared the ground for deeds that, in a cumulative and systematic radicalization, but without full preliminary blueprint, took the form of a total genocide.<sup>95</sup> From this point of view Dr Reşid was neither the servile instrument nor the *enfant terrible* of the central CUP-régime – he was rather its convinced and consistent executioner. He was explicit and did not use the double language and apologetic lies made up in the capital for the Germans' and other foreigners' ears.

Reşid Bey was eager to serve the fatherland in accordance with the will of the party. He was well integrated into the CUP power structure during the years 1913–1916. Despite his pride and his difficult character, he was respected, or at least seen as very useful by the Ittihadist center. The latter was at the time dominated by his superior and party brother, Tâlât Bey, as well as by his colleagues from the School of Medicine, Nâzım and Bahaeddin Şakir. His rapid promotion and his appointment to important posts confirm this view. He was sent to particularly difficult places, beginning with the Aegean region in 1913, where at the end of the same year, a secret policy of expelling Christians was established for the first time. Important offices in the

---

<sup>94</sup> Reşid, *Mülâhazât*, 106-7. Cf. T. C. Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, Arşiv belgeleriyle Ermeni faaliyetleri 1914–1918/ Armenian activities in the archive documents 1914–1918, Ankara: Genelkurmay Basım Evi, 2005, vol. 1, 235-81.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Herbert, Ulrich (ed.), *Nationalsozialistische Vernichtungspolitik 1939-1945. Neue Forschungen und Kontroversen*, Hamburg: Fischer, 2001.

Eastern Provinces followed, where since the spring of 1915 a policy to remove the Armenians completely was applied. In autumn 1916, this enormous goal had been more or less achieved.

After the “success” of the anti-Armenian policy, the regime had gained a prime interest in cooling things down, so as not to compromise its future on the international scene. At this point Dr Reşid became an inconvenience to those in power, partly because his misdeeds had not passed unnoticed by the foreign powers. They had even led to vivid protests by the German ally. The name of the *vali* of Diyarbakır had become a symbol for the premeditated murder of Christians. In addition, Reşid Bey, as *vali* of Ankara (between March 26, 1916 and March 27, 1917), turned against the system then in place, which was full of corruption and war profiteers. His intransigence and straightforwardness began seriously to upset the regime. Confronted by corruption among functionaries in the *vilayet* of Ankara, on the other hand, Dr Reşid could not remain inactive. It is not clear whether stories telling of Dr Reşid’s enrichment while in office are true.<sup>96</sup> His efforts to make a living through trade in 1917–1918 and his family’s poverty after 1919 seem to suggest the contrary.<sup>97</sup> But possibly after 1913 he became both licentious in his hate against Christians, and, as so many other officers, corrupt and greedy. Unlike more Machiavellian figures such as Tâlât, or his two colleagues mentioned above, the patriot Reşid Bey probably believed at least partly in the view of the Armenians as “exploiters,” “bloodsuckers,” “tumors,” and “microbes.” This dehumanized and pseudo-scientific vision of internal foes seems to have coexisted with the tenderness of the family father Reşid Bey, even if he was mostly absent, taken by his beloved service for the state (again an unsurprising finding if compared with perpetrators of the Jewish genocide in the Second World War).<sup>98</sup>

It was Reşid Bey’s known and irrefutable implication in the murder of the Armenians that made this figure embarrassing to the CUP politicians, who, faced with defeat, wished to save their heads, and also, their national project in Anatolia. To wide political circles, it was thus tempting to point at certain Ittihadists, and to portray the *vali* of Diyarbakır as exceptional. Rightly, Süleyman Nazif asked in 1919, “Beyond Diyarbakır, there is a whole other group of men

---

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Süleyman Nazif, “Doktor Reşid”, *Hadisat*, 8 Şubat 1919 (Bilgi 1997, 170).

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Bilgi 1997, 41.

<sup>98</sup> Reşid's last words to his family were undeniably tactful and touching. Reşid, “Son Sözüm”, *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 10 February 1919 (Bilgi 1997, 155–56).

like Reşid. What will they do?”<sup>99</sup> Mehmed Reşid was hardly wrong in feeling himself to be the scapegoat for an entire large group, when after his arrest, he wrote in his diary that he alone was held responsible.<sup>100</sup> Others could have wanted his suicide, but there is no evidence. Once the Turkish national movement had won its battle and had established itself internationally, it was no longer so necessary to distance oneself from Reşid. This crops up again, however, in the interview by a journalist from *Resimli Tarih* with Mithat Şükrü, during which, in an account of his conversation with Reşid Bey, the former portrays himself as being above all criminal suspicion.<sup>101</sup>

By taking the impoverished family of Dr Reşid into its care after his suicide – even though in itself an irreproachable act by the Great National Assembly of Angora – the republic at the same time explicitly appropriated the political figure of Reşid Bey. This second act bore grave consequences. Dr Reşid once again became the loyal and deserving servant of the state, according to the image he himself cultivated in his notes. A few lines written by Mithat Şükrü Bleda on Reşid Bey in his memoirs are very significant in this regard. Contrary to the interview in *Resimli Tarih*, the secretary general of Union and Progress from 1916–1918 speaks clearly here. In no way does he question the behavior of the *vali* of Diyarbakır. On the contrary, Mithat Şükrü portrays Dr Reşid as an infallible man of science who, rightly and for the supreme salvation of the Turkish nation, had been resolved to “annihilate the illness and the ill,” meaning the “minorities” and the Armenians here perceived as mentally ill – a kind of judgment that condemns its author and its author's ideology. Social Darwinism, hygienic discourse, a cult of *raison d'état*, and political resentments blend together in his extraordinary vindication:

*Vali* Dr Mehmed Reşid Bey was a doctor who, amid the most difficult of conditions, did not shy away from bearing the responsibility for the heavy duties he had been charged with.... Regarding the question of how the fatherland [*memleket*] could be liberated from its pains, after he diagnosed the disease in question and took all responsibility onto himself, and, as doctor and statesman, showed the courage as well as the maturity to accomplish the task he had been accorded.... This was during the most critical period of Turkey's political life, in

---

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Süleyman Nazif, “Doktor Reşid”, *Hadisat*, 8 Şubat 1919, (Bilgi 1997, 171).

<sup>100</sup> Reşid, *Günlük*, 119 and 135.

<sup>101</sup> Güngör 1953, 2444–45.



the years 1908–1918. *Vali* Dr Mehmed Reşid Bey was then serving in the civilian administration. He diagnosed the mental illness [*ruhî hastalıklar*] of the minorities. For they supported England, Russia and France, who for centuries had desired to partition Turkey, and were finally also of help to the United States, in that they referred to the principles of President Wilson. In conjunction with the diagnosis, *Vali* Dr Mehmed Reşid Bey also pointed out the last possible cure during the final period: Either to destroy the illness and the ill, or to see the entire Turkish people and its country perish at the hands of maniacs [*deliler*]. *Vali* Dr Mehmed Reşid Bey was a scientist. His outlook and his behavior could not be wrong, and were not. *Vali* Dr Mehmed Reşid Bey's behavior was sanctioned by the National Assembly of Turkey by according his children an annuity in return for his services to the fatherland, and also recognized by Atatürk.”<sup>102</sup>

How can we explain Dr Reşid's thoughts and actions? An important underlying factor of *vali* Reşid's final stance was the power- and state-oriented socialization at the Military Medical School, where young men, members of the Muslim ruling class (*millet-i hakime*) worried about their and their state's future, vexed by the specter of its end. Those seen guilty for this specter – first Sultan Abdül Hamid, then the Ottoman Christians, above all the Armenians – needed to be eliminated. Power, politics and fatherland stood above ethics and History's judgment. As far as our sources show Reşid became openly anti-Christian only as governor of Karesi in 1913–1914, when he was deeply involved in the expulsion of Greek-Orthodox compatriots. At the beginning of the First World War, he took offices near the front where he saw defeat. He became anxious, angry and arrogant. When in March 1915 he arrived in Diyarbakır he was radicalized enough to do what he did between March and September. The material presented in this chapter gives the impression that he arrived with the determination once and for all to get rid of the Christians in his province where a strong anti-Christian potential already existed. Dr Reşid just needed specific orders from the center.

He believed that the Ottoman nation would be annihilated by inner and exterior foes, that the Muslim “nation” with which he identified was in a deadly battle between Muslims and Christians, between Turkish power and the effrontery of the traditionally subordinate *gavur* – this

---

<sup>102</sup> Bleda 1979, 61–62.

is the basic tenor of *Mülâhazât*, his apologetic text of the end of 1918.<sup>103</sup> Reşid set the decline of its own nation against the genocide of others. For its “salvation” he felt compelled to destroy an entire community. The “patriotic” mass murderer declared ill and incurable, and therefore a target of mass killing, this community of defenseless victims. The fact that both Young Turkish generations, including the founders of the Republic of Turkey, counted Dr Reşid amongst its heroes, and not among its tragic and criminal figures, betrays a more general setting of the course of history. This has cast dark shadows onto the historical conscience of several Turkish generations to follow. One ought not simply to dismiss Dr Reşid as a demon, but to analyze and contextualize his personality, career and actions. At long last, facts should be faced as to what criminal point this “upright patriot,” and with him Union and Progress, the great organization of the Turkish national movement, had arrived at in 1915.

---

<sup>103</sup> Reşid, *Mülâhazât*, 77–113.